

Eastern MRS Meeting Notes
January 24, 2008
Sampson County Auditorium

Counties Present: Bladen, Brunswick, Carteret, Harnett, Hoke, New Hanover, Robeson, Sampson, Wilson

Introductions

News from Raleigh

Evaluation: Duke – Fact Sheets, Data Entry, Updates

CPS/WF Collaboration Issues

Further Discussion of the System of Care - Partnering with families and children

Favorite Things Accomplishments, Tricks, Tip-n-Tools, Practice, Wishes for 08

Blueprint Feedback

News from Raleigh

- New supervisor for the Performance Management – Dawn Cambridge who came to us from Juvenile Justice.
- WF Institute - April 29, 30, May 1, invitations have already gone out, so if your county has not responded with the number of people you are sending, please do so when you get back to your county.
- MRS Institute – mid August. In mid-February there will be a call for presentations. Hope to have community folks there and expand to 600 people. This means we will have 14 presentations at the same time, so we will need more presentations. If you have an idea, please send it in when the call goes out. (18-20th of August at the Koury Center).
- Announcement was made at the Western meeting regarding the Division's current campaign to help county DSS agencies recruit and retain foster parents. Information gathering, the first phase of this campaign is already underway. Counties have been asked to complete a web-based survey that asks for some demographics and inquires about the agency's perception of its needs in this area. Participation in this survey, which closes Feb 4, is important because the information it provides will help determine the content and emphasis of the next phase of the campaign, which will be a series of foster parent recruitment and retention clinics to be conducted in different parts of the state in late Spring 2008. The purpose of these clinics will be to share innovative and effective strategies and to encourage agencies to develop/refine plans for recruiting and retaining foster parents. The Jordan Institute for Families at the UNC-CH School of Social Work, which is assisting the Division with this campaign will follow up with participating agencies at least quarterly during SFY 2008-09 to offer additional support and information. If agencies have questions about this campaign or want information about participating in the online survey they should contact the Jordan's Institute's John McMahon (johnmcmahon@mindspring.com, 828-670-5051) or Mellicent Blythe (mblythe@email.unc.edu 919-843-7382)/
- NC Coalition against Domestic Violence Conference (co-sponsored by the Division) May 21-22 – not sure where the location will be yet, but it will be in the Triangle area.

- Admin letter coming out in the next week or so regarding training. Counties wanted to make orientation around CFTs required for all supervisors and social workers, so it shall be!

Evaluation –

Fact Sheets – Nicole shared what was on the current sheet. Duke wants these to be evolving documents with information that will be useful to local counties, and not just state aggregate data. Things that people like about the current sheet, and want to keep, or things that may not be as useful, or items that are not on there that could be – please share any of these ideas with her. Keep in mind they are trying to keep the fact sheets relatively brief – no more than 4 pages – so adding too many things will require some decisions of what is the most important because some things may need to come off the sheet in order to add multiple new things. All 100 counties will get a fact sheets this year (last year was just the pilot 10.) Asked that folks think about what they want, and then let her know (left cards, or can get her information from Holly or Patrick) obviously may not be able to think of everything you might want right now.

- Think of things that you would want to know if you were going to present to your County Commissioners or your Board.
- All data from the fact sheets comes from the 5106 and 5104. If data is not being entered, then it is not being reported on the fact sheet.
 - For example, the Contributory Factors were not selected for a majority of the cases. Currently although policy requires you to enter one, the Central Registry system does not. Also, currently only the primary contributory factor is available in DW, but are in the process of testing for being able to look at multiple ones.
- Pilot 10 are compared to themselves. 2nd wave counties only compared to other 2nd wave counties, 3rd wave only compared to other 3rd wave counties. Rates of assessment (per 1,000 children) counties were grouped with each other within those groups of 2nd and 3rd wave counties so that similar counties could be compared with each other instead of comparing a Hyde county to a Wake county.
- Using 2005, 2006, and 2007 as years of data.
- Child Safety – looking at doing it on a fiscal year rather than a calendar year. Have gotten some feedback that counties would prefer it this way (and this group agreed).
- Percentage of children with 6 and 12 month reassessments. Looking at combining In Need of Services and Substantiations and then getting rid of the 12 month – just looking at within 6 months of receiving either one of the two findings did a family receive another finding (in other words, instead of separating substantiations and In Need of Services, looking at findings that result in a family receiving 215 services.)
- Frontloading – one of the previous findings of MRS evaluation was that an increase in frontloading minutes of services decreased the rate of repeat assessment. Wanted to know if counties though this was valuable because it is a large table and if there may be something counties would rather have on there.
- Reassessment rates by findings – what are the findings that are associated with repeat assessments – people were interested in this.
- Blended caseloads – is there interest in looking at seeing if counties that have blended caseload have shorter 215 or fewer entries into 109?
- Foster Care Data - do CFTs during foster care result in reunification in less time?

- Look at kids that come into Foster Care through Juvenile Justice versus from CPS.
- Contributory Factors – this information can be useful when advocating for programs or funding. For example if 95% of your substantiations include DV, then you have a powerful tool for advocating for a program in your area.
 - However if you don't enter the stuff, it won't be in there! We recognize that the CFs have some limitations as they are on the 5104. Some of the CFs require a documented opinion from a medical professional The Division has set up a meeting to talk about the CFs. The Central Registry does not require you to put a CFs when keying in the system, but there is not always a CF that is a good fit with the issues in the case, so we are working on it, but it is not as easy as just making it required. In the meantime, if there is clearly a CF that is applicable, please indicate it on your 5104.
 - Would like state sanctioned queries regarding the items on the fact sheet so they would not come as a surprise.
- If folks want good information on their fact sheets they must completed the 5106.
- Currently the fact sheet comes out once a year – we could do twice a year if counties would find it useful.
- Question was asked about looking at cases involving military personnel and DV. Currently there is nothing that indicates if the family is military. Terri Reichert is the policy person that specializes in issues relating to the military. Suggestion was made to add a contributory factor on the 5104 that you could select if it was a military family.
- Question was asked about case management - can you tell how long a case was open and how many cases close by true resolution versus actual solution. The data piece that we are probably missing is why the case was closed – we can't tell from the data if the case was closed “successfully” or not.

CPS/WF Collaboration Issues

- At a meeting for the WF Institute they want to really work on the collaboration between WF and CPS. The WF side feels that they have a handle on what causes the frustration on the WF side, but they are interested to find out what causes the frustration on the CPS side, and if people have found ways to overcome those barriers. They may like to have these as cracker barrel discussions.
 - If you think about any of these please share with Holly or your WF rep or CPR so that they can pass them along.
- We will probably have a similar discussion at the MRS Institute.

Further Discussion of the System of Care - Partnering with families and children

What are things you are doing? As you read records, how do you know that some things are being done differently??

- One county struggles to get other family members (outside of the immediate family being assessed). This county has 2 CFT coordinators who are excellent, but they still have a hard time getting the extended families there. Sometimes they promise to be there and are not, and sometimes it is the primary family that doesn't want them to come.

- When Holly was in Denver some of this came up and the debate was did you honor the wishes of the family or try to look out for what might be in the best interest of the child. For example – one school of thought is that the children are entitled to all the supports they can access, so there may be an aunt that would be a good support for the child, but mom doesn't want her there, so what do you do? Need to find a way to work around this.
- Also a dilemma with divorced and split apart families. When the two sides do not want to be at the table with each other, how do you do what is best for the children. What if mom is scared of him?
 - Have used phone calls so that they are not in the room together, or law enforcement.
 - Also, what if Dad is not a bad guy, he and mom just don't get along? Usually a skilled social worker can negotiate between the two parents and get them both involved.
- Typically the first time you ask the family will say "no one" and that may be ok for the first meeting, but as the case progresses, keep asking and trying to talk to them.
- Also note that since you spent time on the phone with these people, just because they did not come to the meeting, does not mean that your phone call didn't do any good. You may not know about it immediately, but that phone call could have prompted some discussion between the person you called and the family and they may have found a way to support the family without coming to the meeting.
- When you ask the family for a Safety Resource in case you have to place the child out of the home, the person that they say they would be ok with placing their child with, is often someone that they would be ok with having at their CFT.
- What do you do if there is someone that is key to the case and the agency must talk to them, and the family adamantly refuses to have them at their CFT meeting? How can you get those people there, if the family continues to say no.
 - Goes back to how well trained the workers and supervisors are. You have to really make the family understand that this person will be talked to by the agency and wouldn't they rather be in the same room and hear what everyone had to say?
 - Also, lead the family to understand that the reason that they got in the situation they are in now (assessment) is because they were trying to handle everything on their own, and let them see that they need some supports to get out of the situation and not become involved with CPS again an few months down the line.
 - Patrick and Holly were talking to someone from another state about their meetings and in order for the meeting to qualify as a CFT they require participation from at least one person who is not a member of the household.
- Continue to ask, and discuss, with the family as the case progresses, and as the case develops there may be more people coming later on.
 - You never know what might make people start to buy in. Holly told a story about a 15 year old boy who didn't want to come to these meetings and then

he didn't want the school system there, but they were integral to his problems. They let him pick the place for the meeting (not school or where he went for therapy – he picked his church where he was comfortable) and they didn't involve the school to the first couple of meetings and then he grew to understand that they did in fact need to be there, but since they weren't at the first one he didn't show up already resistant to the meeting. Once he understood that he would be truly heard, he was more receptive to having them there.

- What if all the supports come to the meeting but the parents are a no show?
 - One county called the parents from the conference room and let them know that the agency was starting the meeting with or without them. They made plans for the child, worked through the issues, and everything was out on the table. One parent showed up at the front desk 5 minutes before the meeting was scheduled to end.
 - Without the family, you cannot have a CFT, but you can have productive meetings.
- Can't get the professionals there.
 - One county thinks it is because the professionals in their county don't "get it."
 - Holly said that you will need to do community education and often – think how long it took DSS to embrace MRS and it was your whole job. (There are resources to share this training. Community Training where you can invite your whole community to be trained.)
 - Each LME is supposed to have a System of Care coordinator who is a good resource to use. MRS is sort of a DSS thing, but System of Care is a community thing that takes it out a little bit.
 - Figure out how to let the professionals know how this will let them get their needs met. For example, will this result in Johnny being better behaved in class or getting better grades?
 - CFTs are now a Medicaid billable service, so that is no longer an excuse for professionals.
 - One county finds that they have a better result starting with the school social workers as opposed to guidance counselors or teachers. The CPS and school social workers sat down together, and now the school social workers will call in the reports and DSS uses them as the contact to get the teachers or guidance counselors involved.
 - Also used Community Child Protection Teams.
- Resources: PALS (from NCSU) to talk about CFTs and barriers for getting folks there, people from other counties where they have been successful, or individual people who have been a part of CFTs, the MRS Institute will also be opening more spaces this year for community providers, System of Care will have a conference in December (and this is for families as well as all agencies that deal with families).
- Soon there will be an entire policy chapter on CFTs.

Favorite Things

Accomplishment that you are proud of

- Worker who had been an investigator for 16 years and was very invested in doing things that way, but they have now embraced MRS and are full speed ahead – do all the family assessments that they can. Started to make sense when they realized that they were not substantiating so many cases and by getting services in place within the 45 days of the assessments they were not finding as many mandated services.
- Children who have achieved permanence, did well on their Review.
- Sampson is getting a new building and so WF and CPS will all be together.
- As a result of a CFSR in prior years that had room for improvement, the social Services Board, the State, and CPRs all working together got the County Commissioners to approve more supervisor and worker staff and will be getting a new building. Caseloads are getting more manageable.
- Bladen has gotten a memorandum of agreement around the System of Care and working across agencies.
- Carteret - number of 215 cases has gone down 40% in 12 months. They attribute this to frontloading of services.
- New Hanover partners with UNCW on family centered and strength based philosophy and this opens it up to everyone in the agency.
- Division: release of the updated policy manual with the MRS language incorporated into the manual. Our review – although we knew we would fail the review and go into program improvement, but federal folks heard loud and clear that MRS and SOC was working, so much so that we are one of only 13 states that are highlighted on ACF's website to have promising practices.
- Holly is proud that these meetings still take place and are productive. At the meeting she went to in Denver many folks said they had meetings like this when they were implementing, but they no longer have them. But we continue to get input by continuing to have them and getting good attendance.

Tricks, tips and tools – what do you do that you really like?

- Recruitment and Retention project – New Hanover has found this to work very well (so had Buncombe last week). The video shows a realistic picture of social work and this helps screen people out that thought they wanted to do this, but may decide that they really don't. The structured interview is really good as well.
 - Question was asked when this would be available to all counties, and we were not sure but Patrick understood that the Jordan Institute was working with this. Evelyn Williams is the contact.
 - Division is working with National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement - holding a Supervisors Strategic Planning Session and they are all positive about the recruitment and retention project. So, if someone in your agency asks about it, let them know that your county should keep abreast of this.
- Coaching - Holly just went to Coaching in the Kitchen training, and the coaching technique is a wonderful practice for anyone, from working with your case families, as well as your own family and anyone you interact with in a professional or personal arena.

- Being able to revamp the whole CPS structure where you used to have 210 and 215 separately was great. Now Wilson has blended teams that are co-led and the true philosophy is that this case or this child is “our child” makes everything work better, there is more support for each other and things work better.
 - Also developed a transition team to make sure that everything is done and how they will move a case into foster care. This is done within a day or two of a child coming into care. It forces the services workers and the foster care workers to talk to each other and ensured that all needed information was passed along.

Practice – what are things that you are doing that you like.

- Piloting the standardized paperwork – Wilson county supervisors love it. It covers everything that you would ever need to know and makes people think about things that they might otherwise accidentally overlook. It is a big packet, but most of it is checkmarks, and all of it is material that they should be covering anyway.
 - Goes to Children’s Services to March
 - In Home Services will be the next step.
 - This came out as a result of Children’s Services asking if the Division could come up with some standardized paperwork. They started with 210 only, and looked at counties that have undergone a lot of review, (so included Mecklenburg which gets reviewed quarterly). Took Mecklenburg’s protocol and expanded it. Have been piloting this since August, the pilot ends Friday and the counties and Division will meet, and then present to Children’s Services. Part of the reason it is so comprehensive, is that there were several line staff on the work group.
- Ways of ensuring that paperwork/dictation is complete in a timely manner? Some counties will not staff cases for closure if the paperwork is not complete. This is a matter of what the county’s expectation is. People will rise to what is expected of them, so if you make this an expectation, people will do it, if not, they won’t.
 - Struggle with this vs keeping comp time under control.
 - Holly had a suggestion to use the first 2 hours in the morning, often do not have meetings or even making collateral phone calls from 8-10.
 - Wilson has paperwork days where the person is totally unavailable for the remainder of day and the expectation is that at the end of the day at least 4 records are complete.
 - Many other counties have some kind of protected time as well.
- Question came up about funding to lower the staff ratio. We as a state are always working on it, but need to remember two things:
 - State is not the only place for funding, there are some county responsibilities for funding as well.
 - Can’t ask for more money without data to back it up, so when we ask for data, you need to provide it.
 - Also, we need to keep in mind, that we can’t completely “fix” a family. Are we holding on to cases that really legally could close but we are holding on to them because there are other things we want to help them with?

- Try to be proactive instead of reactive. Try to prevent some of these cases coming into the agency to start with.
 - New Hanover county has a program like this with prevention staff working with Work First if people want some ideas.

Blueprint Feedback

- Holly goes back to Denver at the end of the month to meet.
- It was interesting to try and talk about what was best practice and not have everyone come at it from the particular model that they were most used to.
- Decided to develop a continuum because there was never going to be one model because no one wanted to sacrifice the particulars of their model.
- Holly put out the draft document and if people have feedback please share it with her (preferably in writing) so that she can share with the group.

February meetings:

Central: Winston Salem, February 27th

Western: Asheville, St. John's Church, February 19th

East: Pitt Co., February 28th

March meetings:

Central: Rowan County Library, March 26th

Western: Asheville, AB Tech March 27th

East: Lenior Co Agricultural Extension, March 18th